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Executive Secretary

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(S) NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

June 14, 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR, CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Incorporation of the NRO Senior Advisory Planning Group
Recommendations in NRO Planning

The Senior Advisory Planning Group (SAPG) completed its effort late last year. I have reviewed the Group's recommendations with my Program Directors and, we have found several SAPG recommendations useful in our long-range planning.

The SAPG concluded that the NRO's mission remains valid and noted the Packard Commission's endorsement of the NRO's streamlined acquisition management. The SAPG also cited two subject areas for my consideration. The first is the formation of a technology advisory panel to identify revolutionary approaches for meeting intelligence requirements. We have already begun implementing that recommendation. Second, the SAPG recognized the inherent short-term view and conservative nature of the NFIC process. The SAPG noted that the long-term view needed for space systems acquisition and the acceptance of greater risk for higher payoff are unlikely to materialize in the NFIC. Although this is a Community issue, I will provide you with constructive recommendations regarding space systems later.

The SAPG concluded that "cheapsats" are not necessarily less costly once launch and ground systems costs are added. Furthermore, their only likely benefit would be as low orbit spacecraft for limited communications, low resolution imagery, and operational ELINT collection of unsophisticated signals when survivability dominates the collection requirements. Dr. Hermann, the former NRO Director who led the SAPG "cheapsats" review, is investigating this collection niche as part of the Defense Science Board summer studies. At large, he and I share the opinion that "cheapsats" are not likely to significantly relieve our dilemma of requirements versus funding.

The SAPG endorsed the NRO's approach to ensuring a balanced launch capability and suggested withdrawing national payloads from the Shuttle manifest unless a payload explicitly requires man on orbit. I agree. In fact, during the SAPG deliberations, this became DoD policy.

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My greatest concern has been how the NRO can contribute to solving the dilemma of expanding intelligence requirements when significant NFIP funding increases are unlikely. In this regard, the SAPG found that NRO support to military operations is appropriate; however, the Group was unable to come to consensus on a strategy for addressing these requirements. The Group did suggest greater use of technical innovation and exploratory pilot projects; strong top-down control of R&D goals; and, set-aside funding for innovative collection concepts. We have considered these findings and we are also reviewing our own ideas--including management and organizational changes--for more effective use of NRP resources.

One change has already been instituted. We have created an NRO Director's Board to ensure unified, top-down direction for resource allocation within the NRO. It will also be used to elicit and direct greater innovation and healthy technical competition.

In summary, the SAPG has served its purpose. We have considered the Group's findings and integrated pertinent recommendations into our review of the NRO. Currently, alternative management and organizational proposals--that were prepared by my Staff for our review--are being weighed by my Director's Board. I look forward to discussing promising results with you shortly.



E. C. Aldridge, Jr.

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